

Summary of the February 2024 Draft West Manheim Township Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is an overall guide for the development and conservation of West Manheim Township over the next 10 to 15 years. It is not a regulation by itself, but is intended to provide the rationale for future updates to Township development regulations. The Comprehensive Plan includes background information about existing conditions and trends, mapping and a set of recommended policies. This Plan is intended to be implemented through many short-term actions that are carried out within a long-term perspective. The Comprehensive Plan primarily includes policies to address the following topics:

- Land Uses and Housing (including proposed residential, commercial and industrial areas)
- Community Facilities and Services (including parks, recreation and trails, and water and sewage service areas)
- Agricultural and Natural Features Conservation (including conservation of corridors along the river and creeks and ways to preserve farmland)
- Transportation (including traffic, pedestrian and bicycling improvements)
- Ways to Carry Out the Plan

Building upon the County Comprehensive Plan, West Manheim Township has a designated growth area, which is intended to include areas that are zoned for intensive development and that are cost-effective to serve with public water and sewage services. The intent is to discourage sprawled development into outlying farmland and forests.

Major Benefits of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan offers many benefits, including the following:

- Addressing land uses in coordination with transportation issues, to avoid traffic problems;
- Avoiding conflicts between different types of development, such as not allowing intense business uses adjacent to a residential neighborhood;
- Considering development policies in a comprehensive and coordinated manner for an entire area, as opposed to piecemeal review of individual parcels or lots;
- Recommending ways that natural features should be preserved and conserved; and
- Suggesting improvements that should be the basis of future grant applications.

How Was This Plan Prepared?

This Plan was developed in draft form during monthly meetings of a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, which included participation by members of the Planning Commission, members of other Township boards, Township Staff, and other interested citizens.

First, maps showing existing conditions were prepared, as well as summaries of previous plans and reports. Information was collected on existing conditions. An online citizen survey was conducted, with paper copies also being made available. A Vision Statement and a set of Goals were then prepared to provide overall direction for the Plan. Various subject areas were discussed at workshop meetings. The Plan document will then be prepared. A memo was prepared that describes recommended revisions to the Township's Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to carry out the Plan.

Next, a public meeting is being held with the public by the Township Planning Commission to discuss the draft Plan. The Board of Supervisors will then hold a public hearing on the Plan, before considering the Plan for adoption.

Major Goals

The following are some of the major goals of this Plan:

- Provide for orderly patterns of development that provide compatibility between land uses, particularly to protect the livability of residential areas.

- Promote various types of business development in different areas, to increase tax revenues and employment opportunities.
- Protect important natural features, including the reservoirs, the Codorus State Park, creek valleys, flood-prone areas, lakes, wetlands, steeply sloped woodlands, and groundwater and surface water supplies.
- Maintain a strong agricultural economy, with substantial preserved farmland.
- Provide high-quality community facilities and services in the most cost-efficient manner.
- Make well-targeted cost-effective street improvements while improving safety, in cooperation with PennDOT, adjacent landowners and developers.
- Promote citizen input, including making sure residents are well-informed about community issues and have adequate opportunities to provide their opinions on Township matters.
- Coordinate transportation, development and infrastructure across municipal borders, and seek opportunities for shared municipal services.
- Continually work to put this Plan into action through a program of updated planning and short-term actions in accordance with a long-range perspective.

Land Use and Housing Plan

This chapter includes recommendations for land development and conservation policies in various areas. The Township's zoning regulations should be updated to be generally consistent with this Plan. Zoning is the most valuable tool available to the Township to carry out land use and housing policies. The following are the major land use categories, as shown on the Draft Comprehensive Plan Map:

Farming/Rural (relates to the F zoning district) - This category should continue to include the largest areas of lands in West Manheim, including most of the land in the eastern, southeastern, southern and southwestern parts of the Township. The word "Rural" is proposed to be added to this category because many areas are wooded and not used for farming. This category includes lands: a) along Impounding Dam Road, b) along Bankard Road, c) along Glenville Road., d) south of Codorus State Park along Dubs Church Road, e) along Frogtown Road near Fuhrman Mill Road, f) east of Pleasant Hill Road, and g) west of Mussleman Road north of Baltimore Pike.

These areas should primarily allow agricultural uses, with limits on the allowed numbers of new single family detached houses on each tract of land. The goal is to preserve most farmland or woodland in larger tracts of land that can be efficiently farmed or managed for forestry, while minimizing residential intrusions into agricultural and forested areas. For example, on a tract of up to 5 acres, one new lot is currently allowed. On a tract of 5 to 15 acres, 2 new lots are currently allowed.

Single Family Residential (relates to the current R Residential zoning district) - The Single Family Residential areas are proposed to continue to include most of the north-central and central areas of the Township, which includes land east and west of Baltimore Pike. This category includes most of the modern existing and proposed single family detached residential developments in the Township. It also includes the large Homestead Acres townhouse development west of Oakwood Drive, which might be better moved to the Suburban Residential category. This category includes much of the land along Sunset Drive, Fairview Drive, and Oakwood Drive. The district mainly allows the following uses by right: most agricultural uses, single family detached houses and side-by-side twin homes. Consideration should be given to no longer allowing two unit buildings that are not side-by-side twins.

There is a provision for age-restricted housing, but it should be revised to include additional density incentives and flexibility in dimensional requirements.

The minimum lot size for a single family detached house is proposed to continue to be 15,000 square feet (1/3 acre) with central water and sewage services, and one acre with on-lot wells and septic systems. With central sewage and water services, each half of a twin home can include 10,000 square feet.

Currently, in the R zoning district, if a lot includes over 15 acres of land, it is required to be developed under the Conservation Design Subdivision provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. The intent is to allow smaller lot sizes and flexibility in the placement of homes, in return for the permanent preservation of a substantial percentage of the total area of the tract. The homes are clustered together on the more suitable

land areas. This open space could be a Township park, could be added to an adjacent publicly-owned lands, or could be open space preserved through a homeowner association.

Suburban Residential (relates to the current SR zoning district) - This is the highest density residential district, and currently allows all types of housing. This category mainly includes land along Pumping Station Road and Wanda Drive. Most of this land is occupied by townhouses, apartments and single family detached houses. With central water and sewage services, a single family detached house can be built on a 10,000 square feet (1/4 acre) lot, a twin home can be built with 7,500 square feet per home, and a townhouse can be built on a 2,000 square feet lot, but with a maximum overall density of 12 townhouses per acre.

Many opinions were expressed in the Citizen Survey that West Manheim Township has accepted more than its fair share of dense housing developments in recent years. The current allowed density of twelve townhouses per acre is a higher density than is typically allowed in most suburban townships. Such a high density of townhouses can result in most of the front yards of units being occupied by parking spaces, and with little room for on-street parking. Multi-family units/apartments are also allowed by right, at a density of 12 homes per acre. Consideration should be given to reducing the maximum density for new townhouse developments to 8 homes per acre, and the maximum density for new apartments to 10 homes per acre. At the same time, the maximum density for single family detached houses could be increased to 6 homes per acre, so that a developer is not penalized for building single family detached homes. A mobile/manufactured home park should continue to be allowed at a maximum density of 5 homes per acre. The district also allows nursing homes and other senior care facilities.

Neighborhood Commercial/Residential (proposed new zoning district) - This category is proposed to include most of the lands along Baltimore Pike from south of Sunset Drive extending south past Fuhrman Mill Road, except for: the Walmart, the bowling alley, the UPMC facility, and immediately adjacent lots. This category would also include an area along the Baltimore Pike in the vicinity of Tollgate Road and Utz Drive.

These areas are mainly intended to allow for commercial uses that make good neighbors for nearby homes, as opposed to intensive commercial uses. These areas are mainly intended to provide for retail stores, banks, funeral homes, day care centers, offices and personal service businesses. The intent is to avoid new vehicle repair uses, auto body shops, late night drive-through restaurants, and 24 hour gas station/convenience stores in these areas. These areas would also allow for some housing, including single family detached houses, twin houses and apartments above commercial uses.

Commercial - These areas are proposed to provide for a wide range of commercial uses. These areas would include the Walmart, UPMC and certain portions of the northern part of Baltimore Pike that are suitable for intensive commercial development.

Commercial-Industrial (relates to the current C-I district) - This category is proposed to be reduced in size to only include an area along Baltimore Pike south of the Pleasant Hill Fire Company. The concern arises because the current C-I district currently allows a very wide range of intensive commercial and industrial uses, and it is interspersed with homes and is immediately adjacent to many residential neighborhoods. The road system of West Manheim, the amount of agricultural preservation zoning, and the dispersed residential development make it difficult to find large suitable areas for industrial development. There are substantial opportunities for industrial development in Penn Township to meet the region's needs.

This category should continue to allow for a wide range of commercial and industrial uses. The most intensive uses should need Zoning Hearing Board or Supervisors approval, larger setbacks and wider buffer yards near homes.

Traditional Neighborhood Development/Mixed Use (would replace the current BC Business Campus district) - This category is proposed to include land south of the Pumping Station Road corridor and east of the Baltimore Pike corridor via Brunswick Drive, as shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map. These lands are east of the Elementary School and east of Brooks Landscaping Supplies and south of Extra Space Self-Storage. The intent is to promote "Traditional Neighborhood Development" that recreates the best features of older development in new development.

A traditional pattern of development should be required, including inclusion of front porches, alleys and placement of most garages to the rear or side of most of the homes. A TND should include inter-connected streets with rear alleys, where feasible. Alleys are particularly important for townhouses, so that the front of the townhouses are not comprised largely of garage doors, and so that there is room for on-street parking. The alley could connect to a parking pad, a rear parking court, a garage door at the back of the home (possibly with a deck above it) or a detached garage.

These areas could allow a mix of small-lot singles, twins, townhouses and apartments, as well as offices, retail stores, restaurants, personal service uses, health care uses and senior living facilities. Apartments could also be located above commercial uses. A maximum density of 5 homes per acre is proposed, which could be increased to 8 homes per acre through the use of density bonuses or use of transfer of development rights (as described below). A minimum of 20 percent of the tract would need to be maintained as common open space.

Reservoirs and Parks - The Comprehensive Plan Map shows the location of existing public recreation areas. The largest land areas are the Hanover Reservoirs, the Codorus State Park, and the Township Park. This category is not intended to be a separate zoning district, but instead should continue to be part of the Farming zoning district.

Public/Semi-Public Uses - This category highlights major community facilities, such as the West Manheim Elementary School, the fire company and Township-owned buildings.

Historic Preservation - The Zoning Ordinance should include incentives for reuse of historic buildings. For example, a designated historic building might be allowed to be converted into an office, a bed and breakfast inn, two dwelling units, or an antiques store even if that use would not normally be allowed in the zoning district. This process of allowing additional options would also be useful if any churches would close, because it can be difficult to find suitable new uses for old churches.

An additional dwelling unit could be allowed on an area of land of over 2 acres if the land includes a designated historic building. Otherwise, a developer may demolish a historic building so they can build a larger and more profitable new home in its place.

As of 2023, the Township Zoning Ordinance includes provisions that establish a process for the Planning Commission to review proposed alterations or demolition of several historic buildings. However, there is no current process that would allow the Township to deny a proposed demolition of a historic building because of the building's historic or architectural value. Consideration should be given to requiring zoning approval by the Zoning Hearing Board or Board of Supervisors before an important historic building could be demolished. A set of standards should be included to guide the process. For example, a designated historic building should be approved for demolition if the building has no viable use or is damaged beyond the point of economical rehabilitation.

The intent is to have a process for preservation for selected old buildings that have important value because of their history, architecture or cultural significance.

Strengthen Older Areas Along Baltimore Pike and Seek that Sidewalks be Installed Over Time.

The appearance of Baltimore Pike could be improved with street trees and additional landscaping. Species of street trees can be selected that avoid conflicts with overhead utility lines and sidewalks and that allow proper visibility for local businesses. Any new traffic signal posts should use a dark color. If the Township or developers install new street lights along Baltimore Pike, a decorative design with a dark colored pole should be considered.

Federal funds can be obtained to install curb ramps at intersections that are accessible by wheelchairs. Over time, sidewalks should be constructed along Baltimore Pike as funding allows and as adjacent lots are redeveloped. Where sidewalks are not currently provided, a grass area should be kept open along the road that allows walking. Where sidewalks are not currently provided, but paving exists adjacent to Baltimore Pike, then white lines should be painted on the paving within the public right-of-way to designate an area for pedestrians. The intent is to keep parked vehicles out of the painted pedestrian area.

Highly visible crosswalk designs should be used, such as wide piano-key designs instead of simple white lines. Extensions of curbs near crosswalks can improve the safety of pedestrian crossings.

Developers should be encouraged to assemble existing small lots together in commercial areas to allow for development that will have fewer driveways and will result in larger amounts of tax revenue. In particular, there is a desire for a wider range of dining options in West Manheim Township, and for a wider range of retail stores, such as a mid-sized hardware store.

Transportation

Work to provide new road connections and intersection improvements.

The following conceptual road improvements should be considered, after more detailed traffic engineering studies are completed. Those traffic studies would include detailed consideration of crash data, as well as impacts of changes on congestion. There is unlikely to be funding available to complete all of these improvements, so it will be necessary to establish priorities. Cooperation with PennDOT would be needed along State roads, and funding issues are described in the following section.

1. Extend Fairview Drive east of Baltimore Pike to serve the Elementary School and development to the east. - The safety of Elementary School traffic will be greatly improved with a new driveway connection to the existing traffic signal that is north of the School at Fairview Drive. The extension of Fairview Drive to the east will also provide access to a major proposed development to the east of the Elementary School. There already is room for a southbound left-turn lane along Baltimore Pike. The extension of Fairview Drive is likely to be constructed as part of a proposed development to the east.
2. Evaluate potential improvements at the intersection of Oak Hill Drive and Fairview Drive. - This intersection will see increased traffic once Oak Hill Drive is extended to connect towards Grandview Avenue to the north. One option would be to consider an all-way stop signs. It may also be desirable to delineate left turn lanes on Fairview Drive.
3. Extend Oak Hill Drive to the Baltimore Pike/Fuhrman Mill Road traffic signal. - This connection has been planned for years (including previous Township Transportation Plans), but it would require the acquisition and removal of one or two houses on the west side of Baltimore Pike. Oak Hill Drive was constructed to the west of this intersection with a stub street to eventually connect to this intersection.
4. Evaluate adding left-turn lanes on Baltimore Pike into the Township Building and Shorbs Hill Road. - The Township could provide additional right-of-way on its land to the east if needed for this improvement. This improvement would be particularly desirable because of the limited sight distances on the crest of the hill at the intersection.
5. Evaluate adding a northbound left-turn lane on Baltimore Pike at Tollgate Road, if there is sufficient room within the right-of-way.
6. Evaluate changes at the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Baltimore Pike. - This is a narrow intersection with buildings very close to the intersection. If there is development on adjacent land to the southeast, it should include a road connection onto Baltimore Pike at a location with good sight distance. It may be appropriate to not allow left-turns onto Baltimore Pike from Pleasant Hill Road. If an alternative road is available, it may be appropriate to limit Pleasant Hill Road near Baltimore Pike to being one-way eastbound.
7. Evaluate potential changes at the intersection of Impounding Dam Road and Beck Mill Road. - This intersection involves a hill and limited sight distances. One option would be to add a flashing signal over the intersection and rumble strips approaching the intersection. Another option would be to prohibit left-turns from Beck Mill Road onto southbound Impounding Dam Road.
8. Evaluate potential changes at the intersection of Fairview Road and Beck Mill Road. - This intersection has a slightly awkward alignment. There should continue to be efforts with the adjacent

property owner to make sure that crops do not obstruct sight distances. It may be desirable to consider all-way stop signs.

9. Evaluate potential changes at the Impounding Dam Road and Shorbs Hill intersection. - This intersection has limited sight distances because of buildings, a curve in the road and vegetation. One option would be to establish all-way stop signs. Impounding Dam Road is being used as alternative route to congestion on Baltimore Pike.
10. Study the intersection of Lepo Mill Road and Impounding Dam Road. - This intersection has limited sight distance because of a hill, but does not have an easy solution.
11. Consider improvements at the intersection of Hobart Road/Baltimore Pike/Impounding Dam Road. - As traffic increases, this intersection would be a logical location for a future traffic signal.
12. Consider connections between Utz Drive, Pleasant Ridge Road and Heritage Drive. - These neighborhoods would benefit from a second way into their street. Street connections could be provided as part of adjacent developments. Another option is to only provide gated emergency access driveways between the ends of these existing streets.
14. Consider changes at the intersection of Geeting Road and Grand Valley Road. - This intersection has a "Y" shape. It currently has low traffic volumes but may be suitable for all-way stop signs.

The most efficient way to reduce congestion along the Baltimore Pike is to add right turn lanes or left turn lanes at selected locations. These turn lanes allow a smoother flow of traffic, and also improve safety. If traffic moves more smoothly along Baltimore Pike, it will decrease the number of motorists who are using residential roads as alternative routes. A couple example locations are described above. Some examples of potential turn lane locations are described above, but evaluation will be needed as part of a professional traffic engineering study.

Modern adaptive traffic signal electronics can reduce congestion by constantly monitoring congestion on Baltimore Pike and intersecting streets. The signal timing can automatically adjust by varying levels of traffic during different times of the week.

Improve bicycling and trail access throughout the region, including cooperative efforts with Hanover Borough on their reservoir lands.

A draft of the Hanover Borough Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan has been prepared. One major goal is to expand recreation opportunities on the reservoir lands owned by Hanover and to provide additional trail connections. Hanover Borough has expressed an interest in working cooperatively with West Manheim Township on these matters.

The Borough owns 2,350 acres of land around their reservoirs. The maintenance of the land is primarily funded from revenues from the water system. The Borough is currently seeking State funding to prepare a Master Plan for the land areas around both Reservoirs, which would recommend trail connections, consider other recreation and parking improvements, and include a management plan.

To provide a pedestrian and bicycling route from neighborhoods to trails around the Long Arm Reservoir, there could be a designated route from Oak Hill Road to Joshua Drive to Sunset Drive, with some improvements. Having a bicycle route along the length of Oak Hill Road would discourage bicyclists from using Baltimore Pike. It would be desirable to have wider shoulders along portions of Sunset Drive and a parallel bicycle bridge over the creek next to Sunset Drive. White lines should be used to separate the shoulders of roads from the travel lanes.

If a trail system would be completed from the north end of the Long Arm Reservoir, and then through the West Manheim Township Park, and along one side of the Sheppard-Meyers Reservoir, it could result in a 5.5 mile trail. There also would be opportunities for looped trails, which are popular because they do not require a person to turn around and walk over the same route over which they started. If it would be feasible to run a trail completely around the Sheppard-Meyers Reservoir, that would add another 2.3 miles to the route, for a total of 7.8 miles or more.

The design of trails within the reservoir lands would involve some challenges because of the presence of wetlands and steep slopes, and a goal of providing trails that are accessible to persons with disabilities where feasible. Some segments may need to be located along the shoulders of roads where an alternative does not exist. However, for the most part, the Borough-owned and Township-owned lands provide a continuously connected set of lands.

It would be desirable to provide bicycling and pedestrian connections from neighborhoods into the Codorus State Park. One option would be to provide a trail as part of new proposed development east of the intersection of Brunswick Drive and Baltimore Pike. This trail could then extend west to east through open space of the Homestead development. Pedestrians and bicyclists could then be encouraged to use local residential streets to reach Black Rock Road at Lakeview Drive. There are shoulders along the portions of Black Rock Road south of Lakeview Drive, but PennDOT would need to be encouraged to widen the shoulders closer to the Mary Ann Furnace Trailhead. From that parking area, there are connections to most of the trails on the State Park lands. There also is an entrance along Dubs Church Road, which is a low traffic road through an agricultural area. There is also a proposal for a new east-west trail link and a new Township park east of the intersection of Brunswick Drive and Baltimore Pike, which could connect into this trail system.

Agricultural and Natural Features Conservation Plan

Use development regulations to conserve important natural features, including steeply sloped lands and flood-prone land.

West Manheim has many steep slopes, where alterations are regulated in the Zoning Ordinance. West Manheim also regulates development within flood-prone areas. These regulations are based upon the 100 year floodplain, which is an area that has a one percent chance of being flooded in any one year.

Continue to promote preservation of prime agricultural land and the continuation of agricultural activities.

As described previously, most of the undeveloped privately-owned lands in West Manheim is in a Farming zoning district. This district functions to maintain land within lots that are large enough to be effectively farmed.

Four major concentrations of land have been permanently preserved through conservation easements. A conservation easement involves a legal restriction on a lot that prevents the land from being further subdivided and that limits the non-agricultural development of the land. Property owners should be encouraged to consider selling conservation easements to permanently preserve valuable farmland and natural areas.

Under the York County Agricultural Land Preservation Program, a property-owner can request that the County consider the property for an easement purchase. The properties are ranked according to State criteria, which considers such factors as the quality of the soils for crop farming and the proximity of lands that have already been preserved. Appraisals are then completed of the value of the easements, and offers are made to the owners of the highest ranked properties. A property owner then decides whether to accept the offer. As of 2024, the County has capped easement purchases at a maximum of \$3,000 per acre.

A complementary program of preserving land is offered by the Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County. This program can be used to preserve land that does not rank highly under the County system.

West Manheim could consider providing Township funds to supplement these land preservation efforts. For example, Township funds could be used to compensate owners of farmland when the value of the easement exceeds the \$3,000 cap established by the County. If the Township offers to supplement the County agricultural funding, additional State matching funds could be available to the County.

If West Manheim would provide land preservation funding, it would also be valuable to preserve land that does not rank highly under the County program. For example, Township funds could be used to preserve

important natural areas, such as creek valleys. Many of these natural areas can be obtained at a reasonable price per acre because the lands have limited value for private development. The natural areas could be preserved in private ownership or as public parkland. Creek valleys can be valuable for fishing access, trails and other types of passive recreation.

The Township could issue a bond issue or take out a bank loan so that land could be preserved today while the land is still available. The bond issue or loan could then be paid off over a period of years. This type of effort could be funded out of regular annual tax revenues or from a dedicated tax. State law provides the Township Board of Supervisors with the ability to ask voters in a referendum to approve a dedicated tax for land preservation or to approve a bond issue. The additional tax is typically an additional percentage earned income tax or an additional real estate mileage per year. In most cases, an additional earned income tax of 0.25 percent or less has been approved. Under State law, the resulting funding can only be used for land preservation. This type of referendum has passed in 92 townships in Pennsylvania, as well as several counties.

Parks and Recreation

The West Manheim Township Park includes 113 acres north of St. Bartholomew Road. The park is being developed in phases.

There is a need for a second major Township park that would be located closer to the denser developments in the northern part of the Township. The Township is considering alternatives that could result in a public park of over 40 acres with trail connections as part of a new development that would be located east of the intersection of Brunswick Road and Baltimore Pike. It would be desirable to have a safe bicycling and pedestrian connection from residential neighborhoods into Codorus State Park.

A Citizen Survey was conducted in 2023. One of the questions asked respondents to check off the three types of recreation facilities that they felt were most needed in West Manheim Township. The following are the responses in order.

1. Walking, running and off-road bicycle paths and trails
2. Woods, natural areas and creek access
3. Restroom building in a park
4. Place for outdoor concerts and events
5. Children's water spray area
6. Children's playground
7. Tennis or pickleball court
8. Picnic pavilion
9. Dog park (tie)
9. Soccer/football/lacrosse field (tie)
11. Basketball court
12. No additional facilities are needed
13. Baseball/softball field
14. Volleyball court.